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Cowper

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COWPER,

Illustrated

by a series of Views in or near

the PARK of

WESTON-UNDERWOOD

Bucks,

Drawn and Engrav'd by Ja.s Storer

COWPER'S SUMMER HOUSE.

Had I the choice of sublunary good,
What could I wish that I possess not here?

Vide the Task. Book II.

London: Publish'd by Verner and Hood, Booksellers in the Poultry.
Ja.s Storer and Ja.s Greig, Chapel Street, Pentonville, May 1.st 1805.

COWPER,

ILLUSTRATED BY A SERIES OF VIEWS,

IN, OR NEAR,

THE PARK

OF

WESTON-UNDERWOOD,

Bucks.

ACCOMPANIED WITH COPIOUS DESCRIPTIONS, AND A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE POET'S LIFE.

LONDON:

Printed by J. Swan, No. 76, Fleet Street,

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SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE OF COWPER.

AMONG the literary characters that, in the present age, have attained celebrity by the extent of their genius and excellence of their productions, must be ranked the poet Cowper; who, uniting piety to talent, and devotion to principle, employed the graces of poesy to strengthen the bands of morality, and give energy to the precepts which direct the heart to religion and to virtue. The general tendency of his writings is, undoubtedly, to excite and give permanence to the feelings which promote reflection, and incline the thoughts to another and a better state; yet, though chiefly emanating from this principle, they exhibit a variety seldom the produce of a single mind; and we cannot but admire the versatility of his powers, which, engaged in all the diversity of diction, was in all equally successful.

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N Y P L

WILLIAM COWPER, the subject of the present sketch, was born on the 26th of November, N. S. 1731; his father, the Rev. John Cowper, D. D. was rector of Great Berkhampstead, in Hertfordshire, and chaplain to King George II. His grandfather, Spencer Cowper, was appointed chief judge of Chester in 1717: he afterwards became a judge in the court of Common Pleas; and the family may be traced, of respectable rank, through many ages. The poet's mother was Ann, the daughter of Roger Donne, esq. of Ludham Hall, in Norfolk, who died when her son William was about six years old; and her early death, it is presumed, contributed in a great degree to the dark colouring of his subsequent life; for, though bereft of her at so tender an age, her maternal affection left such impressive traces on his memory as were never eradicated, and the sight of her picture, nearly fifty years afterwards, occasioned one of his most exquisite poems, in which he celebrates, with ardor, this guardian of his early years.

When Cowper first quitted the house of his surviving parent, he was sent to a respectable school in Market Street, Hertfordshire; from which he appears to have been removed to the house of a celebrated female oculist, for the benefit of his eyes, but without experiencing any essential relief. From her he went to Westminster

school, where he caught the small-pox, which entirely removed his complaint.

During his stay at Westminster, he experienced much of the tyranny of the elder boys, which served still more to depress a mind unassuming and timid in the extreme; yet, notwithstanding these disadvantages, he there acquired great reputation as a scholar. At the age of eighteen, he was removed to the office of Mr. Chapman, an attorney, to whom he was articled for three years. This connection was formed contrary to his inclination, and tended to increase his natural melancholy, which, as he advanced in years, imbittered his existence, and rendered life a burthen. After quitting the house of Mr. Chapman, he settled himself in the Inner Temple, as a regular student at law, where he cultivated the friendship of his old Westminster schoolfellows, Bonnel Thornton, and Colman, (now eminent for their literary attainments,) whom he assisted in their periodical paper, entitled the Connoisseur; and it is supposed that his talents, for that pleasing and useful species of composition, were equalled only by those of Addison himself. By the interest of his family, Cowper had great prospects of advancement, and, in the year 1762, he was appointed to the office of Reading Clerk and Clerk of the Private Committees in the House of Lords; this station his peculiar dispo-

sition made extremely perplexing, and finding himself unable to support its most essential duty, that of reading in public, he resigned, and his friends endeavoured to procure for him a situation more consonant to the tenor of his disposition. Their good intentions were again defeated, for Cowper being promoted, in the same assembly, to the office of Clerk of the Journals, and an unexpected event making his attendance indispensible, his apprehensions and alarm on the occasion so obsolutely overpowered his reason, as to render him incapable of that honourable employ. The situation of Cowper at this period was so distressing, that his relatives were induced to remove him to St. Albans, and place him under the care of Dr. Cotton, a gentleman remarkable for the urbanity of his manners. With him he continued a considerable time, a prey to settled melancholy; this, though partly occasioned by the above circumstance, was greatly increased by awful apprehensions of eternal vengeance; apprehensions which had long oppressed his mind, but from which, at length, he was mercifully relieved; and, to use the language of holy writ, he was brought to experience his interest in that "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

In the summer of 1765, he quitted St. Albans, and retired to private lodgings in the town of

Huntingdon, where he became acquainted with the family of the Rev. Mr. Unwin. This was the most important intimacy, from its result, that Cowper ever formed, though it was acquired in the most fortuitous way. On his first visit to one of the churches in Huntingdon, he engaged the notice of William Cawthorne Unwin, son of the above-mentioned divine, who, observing somewhat peculiarly interesting in his countenance and manner, on the conclusion of the service, followed him to a lonely walk, and introduced himself to his acquaintance. The friendship of the Unwins was a source of the most refined pleasure to the solitary poet, who, in a short time, left his lodgings and became an inmate of their house, where he experienced every attention friendship could devise, or the purest affection confer; and, if any man ever enjoyed felicity unalloyed in a world of sad vicissitude, Cowper certainly did in the company of his new friends. But short is the duration of all sublunary bliss. The hemisphere of their enjoyment was suddenly overcast by the accidental death of the elder Mr. Unwin, whose existence was terminated by a fall from his horse, before Cowper had enjoyed his acquaintance two years. Shortly after the death of Mr. Unwin, his widow and Cowper removed, through the invitation of the Rev. Mr. Newton, to Olney, in Bucking-

hamshire, of which parish Mr. Newton was then curate; and, as the views of the poet and the clergyman, on religious subjects, were exactly coincident, a mutual attachment arose, and they jointly produced a volume, entitled OLNEY HYMNS; an undertaking eminently adapted to the genius of Cowper, as may appear by the following extract, in which the most beautiful imagery and the most devout effusions of piety are happily combined:

The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With pray'r and praise agree,
And seem by thy sweet bounty made
For those who worship Thee.

There, if thy spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
O with what joy, and peace, and love,
She communes with her God.

There, like the nightingale, she pours
Her solitary lays;
Nor asks a witness to her song,
Nor thirsts for human praise.

Such was the growing friendship of these amiable characters, that they omitted no opportunity of enjoying an intercourse which seemed to constitute, in an equal degree, the happiness of both; and it might have been supposed that no impediment existed, as their residences were not

more than three or four hundred yards asunder; yet, such was the reluctance of Cowper to sustain public notice, that he devised means to render their visits more frequent, and less exposed to the never-wearied eye of indolent curiosity*.

Thus situated, and with such friends, Cowper might have been once more happy; but, before he had completed the number allotted to him of the Olney Hymns, he was again attacked by that rooted melancholy, which seemed so completely interwoven with his constitution, that neither medical art could eradicate, nor human reason repel it. This relapse was occasioned by the death of his beloved brother, the Rev. John Cowper; and though it did not occur immediately, the painful experience of Mrs. Unwin was sufficiently demonstrative of its cause, as, from

* The vignette, on the title-page, represents the Summer-house of Cowper: through the window is seen part of the parsonage house, and the wall which surrounds the garden belonging to it. In this wall a door was opened, which being separated from his garden by an orchard, he rented a passage across the latter, for which he paid one guinea per annum: from this circumstance the place was called Guinea Field. This little summer-house, which measures on the floor six feet nine inches, by five feet five, he humorously describes in various letters, published in Hayley's Life of Cowper. It was formerly occupied, he says in one of those letters, by an apothecary as a smoking room, and it appears he had contrived a hole in the ground (covered by a trap door) in which he kept his bottles. And in another to his cousin, Lady Hesketh, who was about to visit Olney, he calls it a "Band-box" and his "Work-shop," in which he fabricates all his verse in summer time, and amuses her with the idea, that when she pays him a visit there, they shall "be as close pack'd as two wax figures in an old-fashioned picture-frame."

that time, his mind gathered, each succeeding day, a train of desponding reflections, which ended in the entire derangement of his reasoning powers. Here a blank presents itself in the life of this eminent man, which might be filled by a relation of the kind offices performed by the amiable Mrs. Unwin, whose chief endeavour was to alleviate the woe-fraught heart of her afflicted friend; and, to her eternal honor be it recorded, that, notwithstanding appearances of the most discouraging nature, she shrunk not from the arduous task, and her regard remained unimpaired, her solicitude unabated, through the long and trying season of ten distressing years. To her endeavours, therefore, as an instrumental cause, may be attributed the recovery of that intellect, which has charmed the present, and will continue to charm every future age, to the latest posterity. This vacuum in his life, he doubtless alludes to in his second verse on the Poplars:

> *Twelve years* had elaps'd since I last took a view
> Of my favourite field, and the place where they grew;
> When, behold, on their sides in the grass they were laid,
> And I sat on the tree under which I had stray'd.

His first employ, when emerging from this state of melancholy, was to attend and feed a leveret, which he had procured from a neigh-

bour. No sooner was it understood, as he himself observes, that he was the patron of young hares, than he had offers of as many as would stock a paddock: from these, however, he only chose two others; and, in an epitaph on one of the three, he thus acknowledges the motive that induced him to undertake this charge.

> I kept him for his humour's sake;
> For he would oft beguile
> My heart of cares that made it ach,
> And force me to a smile.

These, together with his affectionate attendant, Mrs. Unwin, and his friend Mr. Newton, were for a long time his only companions; but, when that gentleman became pastor of the church of St. Mary Woolnorth, Lombard Street, Cowper lost the society of one whom long and close intimacy had much endeared. After Mr. Newton's removal to London, the poet contracted an acquaintance with the Rev. Mr. Bull, of Newport Pagnell; a man of sprightly manners, who, perhaps, by the liveliness of his disposition, was of essential service in composing the mind of his newly-acquired friend, which was now returning, though by slow degrees, to its long-departed serenity and vigour. Through the solicitation of Mr. Bull, he was influenced to undertake the translation of some of Madame de la Motte

Guyon's poetry. It may here be remarked, that the principal works of this poet were occasioned by the request of one or other of his friends; and such was the yielding pliancy of his nature, and the powers of his vigorous mind, that he found it easier to gratify their every wish, than to resist their least enforced solicitations. The first volume of his poems was written, with the exception of a few small pieces, by the persuasion of Mrs. Unwin, who perceived the necessity of employing his active mind, to prevent its verging to that particular train of thinking, which was capable at any time of absorbing all his faculties, and against which the exercise of his poetic talent was an effectual barrier. This volume was accompanied with a preface by the Rev. Mr. Newton; for, such was the natural timidity of Cowper, and his extreme backwardness in appearing before the public, that he dreaded the piercing eye and forbidding frown of criticism, which himself acknowledges had a tendency to "freeze his poetical powers." See Hayley's Life of Cowper.—The success of his first labors was not in any degree commensurate to their deserts; but in this respect he stands not alone: Milton's Paradise Lost, the noblest poem in this, or any other language, on its first appearance, is will known to have been equally neglected. Before the publication of a second volume, his merit was

discerned and acknowledged, and Cowper has since stood unrivalled among the poets of this age.

In the year 1781, he became acquainted with Lady Austin, the widow of Sir Robert Austin, Bart. and so highly was she pleased with his company, that, in the ensuing year, she became the tenant of the parsonage house, and consequently enjoyed the advantage of that communication between the two houses, which has been already noticed. The lively and fascinating manners of this lady wrought a remarkable change in the pensive disposition of Cowper, and his friends began to indulge a hope that her society might be the happy means of entirely subduing that painful propensity to melancholy, which so frequently overpowered his reason. Yet, notwithstanding these appearances of complete ascendency, her utmost address was at times necessary to prevent him from sinking again into his constitutional despondency, which, even in her company, would often manifest itself in an alarming degree. On these occasions, she would prevail with him, to contribute his verse for the exercise of her harmonious, vocal powers, which, accompanied with her musical talents, would generally dissipate the hovering gloom. Most of his lighter pieces were composed in compliance with this lady's wish, and, in particular, the hu-

morous adventure of John Gilpin; a species of ballad which has been followed by many of a similar kind from other hands, but has never perhaps been equalled. While Cowper's acquaintance with Lady Austin continued, he enjoyed many of those pleasant winter evenings described in the Task, which poem, as he acknowledges in the preface to his second volume, was undertaken at her request.

This volume was completed in the year 1784; shortly afterwards he commenced that arduous undertaking, the translation of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. This was the busiest scene of Cowper's life, yet the activity of his mind was equalled by the exertions of Lady Austin to employ it; and so much had she obtained the ascendency over his mind, that he seemed to have resigned himself entirely to her dictates. This influence occasioned in the breast of Mrs. Unwin the greatest inquietude; she was conscious her friendship had sustained the severest test, and, on that account, had prior pretensions to, and best deserved, his esteem; but, on the contrary, she suspected, with a mixture of mortification and regret, that her own influence was daily declining, and, for this reason, thought herself justified in resolving to quit a situation, where nothing was anticipated but indifference or disrespect. Cowper prevented the execution of her design;

for, on the first perception of her anxiety, and knowledge of its cause, he generously sacrificed, to her peace, a connection so dear and intimate, and, by this proceeding, evinced his grateful remembrance of her disinterested and assiduous regard.

In the summer of 1785, after many delays, the works completed during the preceding year were published, and his poetical fame, about this period, contributed to the renewal of an acquaintance with his cousin, Lady Hesketh, who, in her juvenile years, had been his associate. This lady had been absent from her native country a considerable time, but, on her return, sought a revival of their intimacy, after a suspension of nearly twenty years. This was an incident of much importance to Cowper; for, shortly afterwards, his kinswoman removed to Olney, and, by her proximity to his residence, had frequent opportunities of manifesting her affectionate regard, which had a happy effect on the drooping spirits of the poet.

In June, 1786, he became tenant of Sir John Throckmorton, of whom he hired a house in the village of Weston, called Weston Lodge. For some time he had been intimate with the amiable family of the Throckmortons; and, though he had long resided at Olney, their repeated invitations, and the contiguity of Weston Park at

length induced him to change his place of abode. On the first of July, 1791, after five years of continued application, he published, by subscription, his Homer; which work, had he produced no other, would be a lasting record of his fame, as it stands unrivalled, and is the best translation of that poet in the English tongue. Notwithstanding this, he was far from being satisfied with the performance, and spent the greatest part of his remaining life in revising and correcting it, with a view to a second edition; and so numerous and important were the alterations proposed, that it might, with propriety, be called a new translation. In the year 1792, he was visited by William Hayley, Esq. but previously to this he had been applied to by his bookseller, Mr. Johnson, to engage in a splendid edition of Milton, in which the Latin and Italian poems were to have been translated, and the whole accompanied with critical and explanatory notes. This design coming to the knowledge of Mr. Hayley, who was himself engaged in writing the life of that poet, he wrote to Cowper on the subject, and the correspondence that ensued commenced a friendship that terminated only with the life of the latter. About this time the health of Mrs. Unwin began rapidly to decline: her repeated paralytic fits alarmed and greatly disordered the mind of our poet; he could not contemplate, with equa-

nimity, the decay of one who had so long participated in all his comforts and his cares; their friendship was truly Platonic, and his feelings, on this occasion, cannot be described in language more pathetic than his own, in a poem published by Hayley, part of which we take the liberty to extract:

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight,
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary.

For, could I view nor them, nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary.

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign,
Yet, gently press'd, press gently mine,
My Mary.

In the summer of this year, in hopes of the removal being beneficial to her health, he attended her to Eartham, in Sussex, on a visit to his friend Hayley, and the change of air, or other circumstances, occasioned flattering symptoms of amendment, which gave him unspeakable satisfaction, and relieved his mind from those gloomy apprehensions he had entertained of her speedy

dissolution. During their stay at Eartham, their party was increased by the arrival of the Rev. Mr. Hurdis, a gentleman well known in the literary world; and, perhaps, it has rarely happened, that three persons, of similar pretensions, should meet and enjoy that social intercourse and mutual good will, which were here experienced in a superlative degree.

In the autumn Cowper and Mrs. Unwin returned to Weston, and there, while health permitted, he attended closely to his revision of Homer, and Commentary on Milton. In the latter part of 1793, Mr. Hayley again visited Weston, where he continued several weeks, and, on his return home, passed through London, and laid before the particular friends of Cowper, the slender state of his finances, in hopes, through their interest, of obtaining from His Majesty some provision for his declining years. Cowper's income was not very liberal, and the generosity of his disposition had no tendency to augment it. His discriminating benevolence was so well known, that he was distinguished as the ready instrument of one, whose restless goodness waited not to be implored; we mean the philanthropic Mr. Thornton.

The native diffidence of the poet prevented his immediate application on this occasion, and the

highest encomiums are due to those who so cordially exerted themselves to procure him that support which, it is painful to observe, was not bestowed (from delays in office, or other causes) till he was past the power of acknowledgment; for the increasing debility of Mrs. Unwin was bringing on that dejection, from which he never thoroughly recovered. A few months before this period, his thoughts were engaged in the composition of a poem, under the title of Four Ages; but his depression had so overpowered his reason, that he was unable, except in a few transient intervals, to contemplate on any subject; and though he wrote a part, his mind was never sufficiently at ease to complete it. His increasing melancholy, and the total debility of Mrs. Unwin, made it highly necessary that the kind offices of a friend should be exerted, to render them that attention which each required, and neither could bestow; and, Lady Hesketh, generously foregoing her own comfort, undertook the charge. Thus situated, he would willingly have remained, and died, at Weston, as his attachment to that village was extreme. Far from the busy world, it was calculated, by its pleasing solitude, to captivate a mind like his. For the recovery of his health and spirits, however, it was proposed to try the effect of changing air; accordingly he

was removed, though with much reluctance on his part, on the 28th of July, 1795, under the care of his relative the Rev. Mr. Johnson, to North Tuddenham, in Norfolk. Here they resided till the end of August, when the latter gentleman conducted them to Mundsley, a place situated by the sea side, in the same county; in hopes the bracing gales from the ocean might invigorate the languid systems of his aged friends. From Mundsley, in October, they removed to Dereham Lodge, where his kinsman took every opportunity of diverting his mind; and, though he was not sufficiently tranquil to proceed with any of his engagements, yet the reading of his friend afforded him a temporary relief.

In the summer of the following year, his health seemed much amended, and the hopes of his friends were revived, by his ability to pursue his favourite subject, the new edition of Homer, which now employed all his reasoning powers; but his intervals of convalescence were few, and frequently interrupted by his oppressive malady. In the autumn, they once more removed to Mundsley, but its invigorating air was now of no avail, and in the latter part of October they retired to Mr. Johnson's house at Dereham, where Mrs. Unwin closed a life of vicissitude and care, and, by a gradual decay, expired without a groan.

She died on the 17th of December, 1796, and was buried on the 23d, in the north aisle of Dereham church. On the monument, erected to her memory, are inscribed the following lines:

IN MEMORY OF

MARY,

WIDOW OF THE REV. MORLEY UNWIN,

AND MOTHER OF THE REV. WILLIAM CAWTHORNE UNWIN.

Born at Ely, 1724; *buried in this Church*, 1796.

Trusting in God with all her heart and mind,
This Woman prov'd magnanimously kind;
Endur'd affliction's desolating hail,
And watch'd a Poet through misfortune's vale.
Her spotless dust, angelic guards! defend;
It is the dust of Unwin, Cowper's friend:
That single title, in itself, is fame,
For all, who read his verse, revere her name.

The death of such a friend was the severest stroke Cowper could have received, though it is remarkable, that he scarcely afterwards mentioned her name. In the summer following, his health was in some measure improved by a course of regimen, in which asses' milk was the chief medicine; and he again pursued the revision of his Homer, and continued that employ, with inter-

missions, till March, 1799. A short time before this period, he received a visit from his old friend, Sir John Throckmorton; but as he was now relapsing into his former dejection, he paid little attention to the kind regard of that gentleman. In January, 1800, a dropsical disorder came on, which increasing to an alarming degree, Mr. Johnson persuaded him to try the exercise of a post chaise; but it was more than his feeble frame could bear; and, on the 27th of April following, he expired. Thus died one, who has left to the public, in his works, an inestimable treasure. His life was, with little exception, a series of distressing sensations, from causes which it is neither our business nor intention to examine. It is generally admitted, that his anxiety and despondency proceeded chiefly from impressions of a religious nature; and though some have asserted it is not in the nature of religion to detract from the enjoyments of social life, others have been equally ready to vouch for the validity of the sentiment, expressed by Cowper in the following lines;

> Come then, a still small whisper in thine ear,
> He has *no hope* who never had *a fear*;
> And he who *never doubted* of his state,
> He may, perhaps, perhaps, *he may too late!*

In concluding this biographical Sketch, we must acknowledge having derived our principal materials from the Life of Cowper, by Mr. Hayley, whose researches, being prior to ours, were more successful, though not pursued with more industry.

DESCRIPTION

OF

WESTON PARK,

&c.

"Scenes must be beautiful, which daily seen,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge, and the scrutiny of years."

A SURVEY, though in miniature, of the scenes that occupied the attention, and gave matter to the pen, of the immortal Cowper, must be gratifying to every lover of his muse. It was cause of considerable pleasure to us, while literally retreading the footsteps of a character so illustrious, to observe most of the scenery he has described remaining, without material alteration, through the lapse of more than twenty years. But our design, in this undertaking, being to rescue from

obscurity, and preserve, from the dilapidating hand of time, resemblances of every favoured subject in his rural walks, it was a circumstance of regret to discover, in our research, that the places described by Cowper, unconnected with the demesne of George Courtenay, Esq. had, in many instances, suffered considerable change.

The *Mill*, referred to in the fifth book of The Task, is entirely demolished, and, but for a few scattered stones, the place where it stood would be forgotten. It was situated in a meadow at the foot of Clifton Hill, near Olney, and, from the romantic beauty of the surrounding scenery, could not escape the discriminating eye of Cowper.

In the later editions of Cowper's Poems, a piece is introduced, called *The Poplars*, the destruction of which he deplores. They may still be traced on the ground by the remaining shoots; but when we conceive that the vacuum which appears, was formerly occupied by a race of noble trees, only two of which remain, we lament, with the poet, the havock of the axe, and take up his plaint, when he says,

> The poplars are fell'd... adieu to the shade
> And the whisp'ring sound of the cool colonnade;
> The winds play no longer, nor sing in their leaves;
> Nor Ouse on its surface their image receives.

They stood near Lavendon Mill, about two miles from Olney, on the banks of the Ouse, which, in that place, assumes a majestic breadth, bordered on each side by flags of luxuriant growth, and reflecting, in its meandering course, the various beauties that surround it; among which the poplars were once pre-eminent.

Near Kilnwick Wood, about two miles from Olney, in a north-west direction, mentioned in the Needless Alarm,

> A narrow brook, by rushy banks conceal'd,
> Runs in the bottom, and divides the field;
> Oaks intersperse it, that had once a head,
> But now wear crests of oven-wood instead;
> And where the land slopes to its wat'ry bourn,
> Wide yawns a gulph beside a ragged thorn.

This pit, though still to be seen, is nearly filled up—Our design was to represent it, but, being in the vicinity of trees so remote from beauty as those Cowper has noticed, we found it impossible to do it without the accompaniment of objects mutilated and bare.

Thus much we trust will be sufficient to exonerate us from the charge of omissions, and, we embrace, with pleasure, the opportunity remaining, which is still considerable, to illustrate such

a poet as Cowper, and, in particular, such a poem as The Task.

When Cowper wrote The TASK, he resided at Olney, and it appears by the arrangement of his subjects, his most frequent walk to Weston was through the fields. We propose, therefore, to follow him with as little deviation as possible in his ramble; and as there are many who may wish to gratify themselves with a sight of the places to which he has given celebrity, who are unacquainted with a way so indirect, we shall, for their accommodation, return by the road, and, by this proceeding, give a ready clue to every object.

From the town of Olney, westward, over three fields, the ascent is gradual to the eminence referred to by the poet in these lines,

> How oft upon yon eminence our pace
> Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
> The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew.

From this elevation is seen a prospect extensive in every direction but the north, which is bounded by a quick hedge on rising ground. A little to the eastward may be discovered an elegant mansion, the residence of John Higgins, Esq. near the village of Turvey. In the horizon behind is Ste-

venton, in Bedfordshire; further east stands the "square tow'r" of Clifton Church, near which is Clifton House, the seat of Alexander Small, Esq. and, ranging still eastward, the prospect is bounded by Clifton Wood; till, due east, is seen the "tall spire" of Olney Church and a considerable part of the town. To the Southward is the pleasant village of Emberton, on the right of which appears, when the weather is clear, Bow-brick-hill, and the church on its summit, at the distance of nearly fourteen miles. Due south, in an extensive valley, appear the devious windings of the river Ouse, whose mazy and deceptive course assumes the semblance of various streams: the meadows are likewise intersected by dykes, cut for the purpose of draining floods, which give the land, even in times of drought, a delightful verdure.

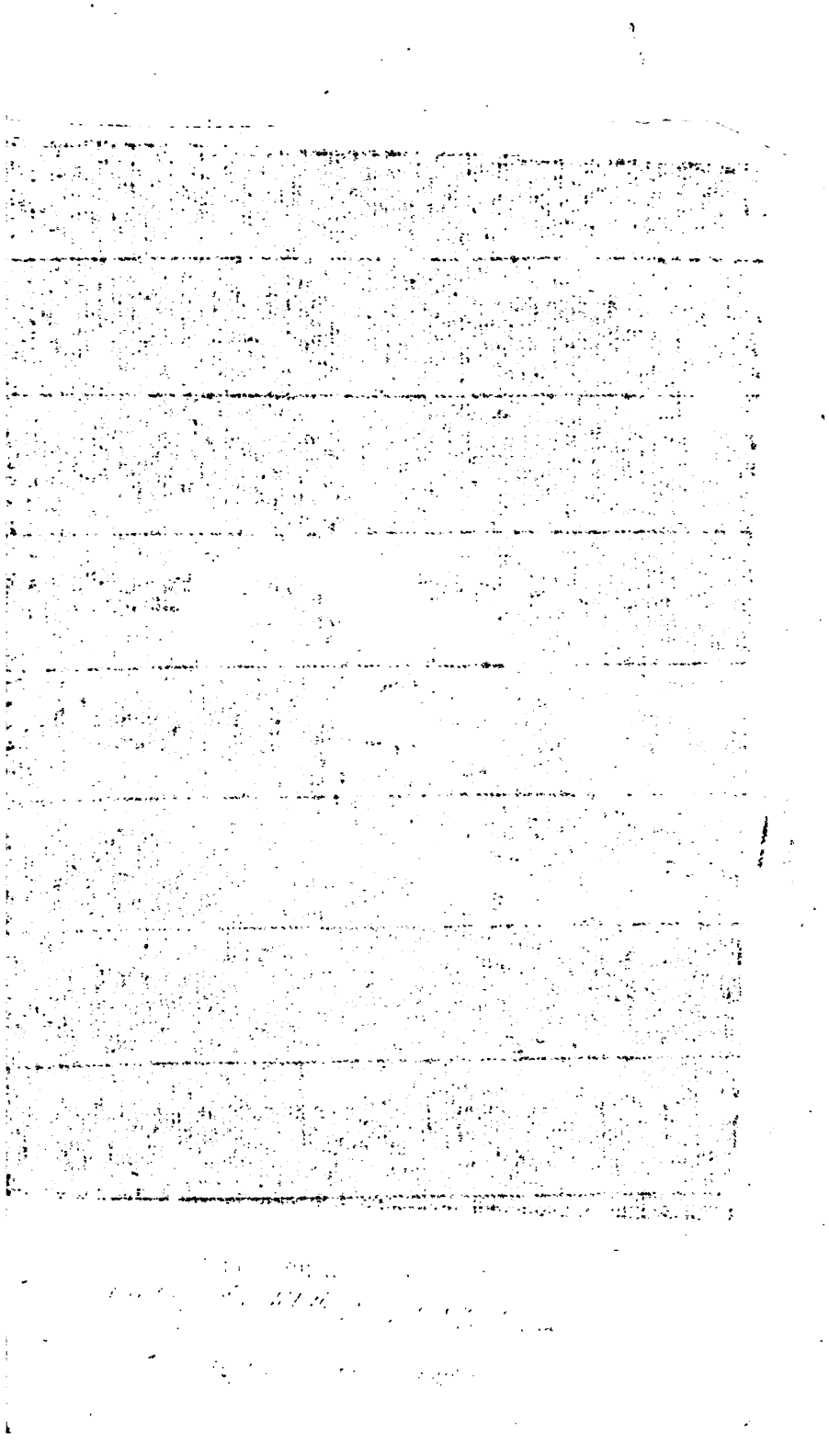
On the banks of the Ouse stand the trees which Cowper mistook for elms. A little to the west, across the valley, on the ascent, appears the magnificent mansion of William Praed, Esq. called Tyringham House; to the south-west is Weston House, the seat of George Courtenay, Esq. embosomed in the trees of the park, which, at this distance, has the appearance of a wood. West-south-west may be seen the *Alcove*, and near it,

on a steep declivity, the *Colonnade*, below which is the *Peasant's Nest*. Due west is *Kilnwick Wood*, and behind it, though not seen, the wood of *Dingle-derry*.

From the eminence, we descend into a valley, and pass the place where the peasant formerly dipped "his bowl into the weedy ditch," and climbing the ascent, arrive, "upon the green-hill top," where is situated

THE PEASANT'S NEST.

This farm house is on a small estate belonging to a Mr. Chapman: it was completely obscured by the elms that surrounded it, only three of which now remain, the rest having been felled, about four or five years since, for the purpose of defraying the expence of inclosing certain pastures allotted to Mr. Chapman in the lordship of Emberton. The trees may still be traced on the ground by their remaining stumps and the abundant shoots rising from them. The house, since Cowper wrote, has been altered, by removing the thatch, and covering the roof with tiles; and the inconvenience it was subjected to, from the want of water, has been obviated by sinking a well; the habitation, by this means, has been rendered



THE PEASANT'S NEST

Drawn & Engraved by Jn.° Greig.

THE PEASANT'S NEST.

Oft have I wish'd the peaceful covert mine.

Vide the Task. Book I.

London Publish'd by Vernor & Hood, Booksellers in the Poultry
Ja.s Storer & Jn.° Greig. Chapel Street, Pentonville May 1.st 1803

more desirable than when he first discovered it. This place is admirably calculated for the indulgence of contemplation, being completely secluded

> From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
> In village or in town.

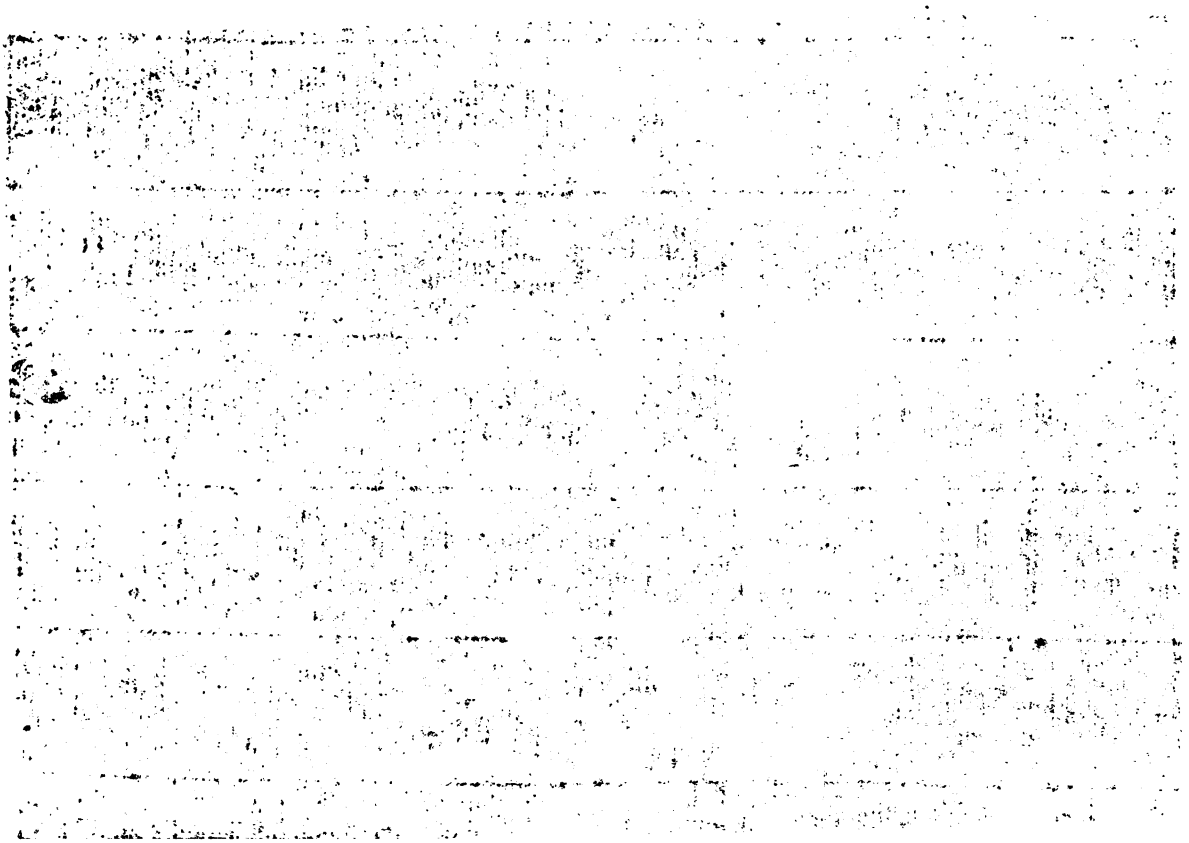
Here may he possessed "the poet's treasure, si-"lence," and here indulged "the dreams of fancy, "tranquil and secure." Its nearest neighbourhood is Weston House, at the distance of about half a mile, though not within sight—the village of Emberton being the only habitable spot in view: this may be seen from the front of the cottage, through a narrow vale, across Weston Park; the bold swell of sloping hills in the foreground, contrasted with the softened tones of distant landscape, richly variegated, forms an effect, beyond description, pleasing and picturesque. This view is taken from the high walk in the Park, the only place from which it can be seen to advantage. From this point the house is in part obscured by the remaining elms, on the left, which, retiring in perspective from the eye, their foliage is united, and they appear like a single tree: the garden-shrubbery and a spreading walnut-tree inclose it on the right, and backed by a rising woodland scene, delightfully diversified, it still has pretensions to the appellation given it by Cowper.

Rising west, from the Peasant's Nest, we pass through a narrow plantation, under the shade of yews, firs, and pines, from which, entering an avenue, between two rows of well-grown chesnuts, "a length of colonnade invites us;" and, while enjoying its welcome shade, we obtain a view of Weston House; a beautiful, though transient, peep, it being soon obscured by intervening foliage.

The descent, through the Colonnade, is aptly described by Cowper, the fall of the ground being extremely precipitant and abrupt. At the bottom, passing a little gate, we come immediately upon

THE RUSTIC BRIDGE.

This bridge was built, about sixty years since, by Mr. John Huggins, for Sir Robert Throckmorton, the grandfather of its present possessor, for the purpose of keeping up a piece of water in the Park: it spans a deep brook, forming a scene remarkable for its wild and romantic beauty, which, after winding its latent course along the bottom of a woody vale, meanders through the Park, and crosses the road from Olney to Northampton, at a place called Overs Brook. The willows near the bridge, whose pendant boughs, "bathed in



...ough wood, from the Lower Falls Nursery, ...
...ded a fine, spacious, and delightful shade of ...
...ees, and gives, as we looked, entering an ...
...avenue, between two rows of well grown chestnuts, ...
...a length of [illegible] less useful and, while ...
...enjoying its [illegible] shade, an ever-shifting view of ...
...Western [illegible] beautiful, though transient, ...
...peep at Bensonwood, caught by intervening ...
...trees.

The descent, through the Colonnade, is rapidly ...
...performed by the horses, the fall of the road being ...
...extremely precipitant and abrupt. At the bottom, passing a toll-gate, we soon [illegible] ...
...town.

THE RUSTIC BRIDGE.

...The Bridge was built about sixty years since, by ...
...Mr. Jonathan Hastings, for Shelburne Falls, ...
...the grandfather of its present proprietor, ...
...Mr. [illegible]. It is a plain, substantial structure, ...
...but [illegible] forming a scene re... ...
...wild and picturesque beauty, which ...
...[illegible] in [illegible] along the bottom ...
...of the [illegible] through the Falls, and ...
...[illegible] to Mount Tom [illegible] ...
...[illegible] Rock. The [illegible] ...
...[illegible] through [illegible] ...

Drawn & Engraved by Jas. Fittler.

THE RUSTIC BRIDGE.

——— upon a rustic bridge
We pass a gulph ———

Vide the Task, Book I.

London Published by Vernor & Hood, Birchin Lane in the Poultry.
Jan.y Sixteen Nineteen. Engd. from Sandoville Bay 1803.

the limpid stream," are cut down, but their site is still marked by rising shoots.

The bridge terminates a grove of trees, which fills the valley, bordering the north-eastern extremity of the Park; here is seen

> "The ash far-stretching his umbrageous arm;
> Of deeper green the elm; and deeper still,
> Lord of the woods, the long-surviving oak."

Ascending from the Rustic Bridge, along the northern boundery of the Park, a path, under the canopy of spreading oaks and elms, leads to the Alcove. This walk is alluded to by Cowper in the beginning of the sixth book of the Task: it commanded a view of Emberton Church across the vale, and from hence he heard "the music of the village bells;" but, from the increased growth of the trees, that stand on the high walk in the Park, the prospect is now nearly excluded. The ascent is difficult, being thickly tufted by mole-hills, incrusted by verdant moss, and mingled with flowery thyme, the scattered sweets of which, regaling the scent, deceive the labor of the stumbling walk; for here the firmest footstep is continually eluded by the yielding earth. On the summit stands

THE ALCOVE.

This structure is a sexagon, of a light and graceful form, composed of wood: it was erected, about fifty years ago, by the same person who built the Rustic Bridge. This pleasant retreat has been deserted by the family, on account of a fatal accident which happened to the builder's son; who, being employed, about twenty years after its erection, in painting the roof, fell from it, and was killed on the spot. The painful reflections which occurred on every visit to the scene of this catastrophe, having induced the family so long to avoid it, it begins to assume evident symptoms of decay*, which is much to be regretted, as it forms a noble ornament to the Park, and affords a resting place both seasonable and convenient, in the face of a delightful and extensive prospect.

The view we have represented is in a direction south-east from the Alcove: in the centre is seen the termination of the grove, commencing at the Rustic Bridge, and the brook just emerging

* Since the first publication of this work, the Alcove has been taken down, and rebuilt.

Drawn & Engraved by Ja.s Storer.

The ALCOVE from the AVENUE.

How airy and how light the graceful arch.
Vide the Task, Book I.

London, Published by Vernor & Hood, Booksellers in the Poultry.
Ja.s Storer, & Ja.s Greig, Orsett Street, Pentonville, May 1, 1804.

Drawn & Engraved by J. Storer

VIEW FROM THE ALCOVE.

Now roves the eye:
And, posted on this speculative height,
Exults in its command.

Vide the Task. Book I.

London: Published by Vernor & Hood, Booksellers in the Poultry.
J. & H. Storer, Engr.s, Chapel Street, Pentonville May 1.1803.

from the shady vale: over the grove may be discerned the tops of firs and pines, which form the plantation between the Colonnade and Peasant's Nest; and rising from the foliage like a lofty obelisk, is Olney spire, beyond which are the hills in the vicinity of Clifton; the row of distant trees, on the eminence, is the high walk, from which is seen the Peasant's Nest.

The Alcove, being open in three divisions, presents as many distinct, though not equally extensive, prospects: through the middle compartment, on the left, the park appears finely adorned with clumps of noble trees, and, among the various foliage, part of Weston House is visible: the Avenue presents itself directly in front: through the opening, on the right, is seen the western boundary of the Park, the walls of which are judiciously excluded by plantations.

Quitting the Alcove, and proceeding to the Avenue, the declivity is

> "sharp and short,
> And such the re-ascent; between them weeps
> A little Naïad her impoverish'd urn
> All summer long, which winter fills again."

This little Naïad is nothing more than a narrow channel to drain the hollow; and we cannot re-

press our admiration of the unbounded powers of figurative poetry, which can raise the minutest trifle to the appearance of dignity and consequence.

A few paces on the ascent stood a wall, which was continued across the grounds from east to west; the foundations may, in many places, be discovered: it served as an inclosure for cattle on one side, and, on the other, towards the house, for deer, with which the park was formerly stocked. The entrance from one inclosure to the other is thus described by the poet, who was favored by Sir John Throckmorton with a key, that he might, at all times, obtain ready access:

"The folded gates should bar my progress now,
But that the lord of this inclos'd demesne,
Communicative of the good he owns,
Admits me to a share."

Having gained the acclivity, we enter the Avenue, under the uniting branches of lofty limes, which form a

....."graceful arch;
Yet awful as the consecrated roof,
Re-echoing pious anthems! while, beneath,
The chequer'd earth seems restless as a flood
Brush'd by the wind."....

In the middle of this Avenue, on turning back,

Drawn & Engraved by Jos. Farington

THE WILDERNESS

From the Grove

Here, unmolested through whatever sign
The sun proceeds, I wander. ——

Vide the Task, Book VI.

London, Published by Cadell & Davies, Strand, Bookseller to the Academy, Jas. Storer & Jos. Farington, Chapel Street, Pentonville, May 1st 1807.

is seen the Alcove, which being painted with a lively white, and inclosed on either side with darksome yews, presents the pleasing and striking effect which we have endeavoured to represent.

THE WILDERNESS.

From the Avenue we enter the Wilderness by an elegant gate, constructed after the Chinese manner. On the left is the statue of a lion, finely carved in a recumbent posture; this is placed on a basement, at the end of a grassy walk, which is shaded by yews and elms, mingled with the drooping foliage of the laburnum, and adorned with wreaths of flaunting woodbine; the walk forms a border to the Wilderness on the northern side, and is ornamented with two handsome urns, one of which we have represented. On its base is engraved an epitaph, to Neptune, a favorite dog of Sir John Throckmorton's, written by Cowper, which we have transcribed.

Here lies one, who never drew
Blood himself, yet many slew;
Gave the gun its aim, and figure
Made in field, yet ne'er pull'd triger.
Armed men have gladly made
Him their guide, and him obey'd:
At his signify'd desire,
Would advance, present, and fire.

Stout he was, and large of limb,
Scores have fled at sight of him;
And to all this fame he rose,
By only following his nose.
Neptune was he call'd; not he,
Who controls the boist'rous sea;
But of happier command,
Neptune of the furrow'd land;
And, your wonder, vain, to shorten,
Pointer to Sir John Throckmorton.

The other is inscribed to a Spaniel, as follows:

Though once a puppy, and though Fop by name,
Here moulders one whose bones some honor claim;
No sycophant, although of spaniel race,
And though no hound, a martyr to the chace.
Ye squirrels, rabbits, leverets, rejoice,
Your haunts no longer echo to his voice.
This record of his fate, exulting view,
He died, worn out with vain pursuit of you.
Yes; th' indignant shade of Fop replies,
And, worn with vain pursuits, man also dies.

Opposite to the entrance is a winding path, leading to

THE GOTHIC TEMPLE.

In the front of the Temple is a hexagon plat, surrounded with a beautiful variety of evergreens, flowering shrubs, and elms, whose stems are co-

Drawn & Engraved by Jn.° Greig

The TEMPLE in the WILDERNESS.

——— Whose well rolld walks
With curvature of slow and easy sweep
——— give ample space
To narrow bounds ———

Vide the Task. Book I.

London, Published by Vernor & Hood, Booksellers, in the Poultry.
Jn.° Raver & Jn.° Greig, Chapel Street, Pentonville, May 1.st 1803.

Drawn by Jn.º Greig & Engraved by J. Storer.

WESTON LODGE

The Residence of the late Wm. Cowper Esq.r

London Published by Vernor & Hood Booksellers in the Poultry
Jas. Storer & Jn.º Greig Chapel Street Pentonville May 1.st 1809.

vered with a mantle of venerable ivy. In the centre of the plat stands a majestic acacia. On the left, a serpentine walk, under a sable canopy of spreading yews, winds to an elegant vista, bordered on either side with laurels, syringas, lilacs, and woodbines, overhung with the golden clusters of the laburnum, interspersed with branching elms, and beeches entwined with circling ivy. At the end of the vista stands a bust of Homer. This bust was in the possession of Cowper, when he resided at Weston, and stood in the shrubbery behind his garden; and, it may be seen, that the bard it represents ranked high in his estimation, by a Greek couplet which he wrote on its base, accompained with a translation by Mr. Hayley, as follows:

> The sculptor nameless, though once dear to fame;
> But this man bears an everlasting name.

Near the bust is a deeply-shaded, winding path, that leads through the Wilderness, and brings us to the Grove, whence we pass a handsome gate to the village of Weston, about the centre of which, on the right, is

WESTON LODGE.

This house is built of stone, showing a handsome and extensive front, ornamented by vines and

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jasmines, which entwine their spreading branches, and overhang the windows in verdant wreaths. It commands from the front a prospect into an orchard planted with well-grown trees, and the village, being straight, on either side may be seen its extremities, bounded at one end by the church, and, at the other, by the gate above mentioned. The inside is roomy and convenient: it has a good kitchen-garden, and an orchard, which was formerly Cowper's Shrubbery; but the pursuits of its present possessor differing, in some degree, from those of the poet, every appearance of this kind is obliterated, except that an officious flower occasionally rears its head, and, in tacit terms, upbraids the destroyers of such a scene. This little labyrinth was much admired, being laid out in the most pleasing style, and ornamented with several summer seats, placed near the borders of serpentine gravel walks, shaded and adorned by the mingled beauties of various flowering shrubs.

Returning to the Park from Weston, on the left, we enter the Grove,

> Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms
> We may discern the thresher at his task.

And under the reviving influence of their shades, we view the north-west front of

Drawn & Engraved by Jn.° Greig.

WESTON HOUSE.

(From the Grove)

The Seat of George Courtenay Esq.re

London Published by Vernor and Hood Booksellers in the Poultry
Jas.° Storer and Jn.° Greig Chapel Street Pentonville May 1.st 1803.

WESTON HOUSE.

This house stands on the south side of Northampton road, and commands a most extensive prospect. It is extremely irregular in its appearance, having been built at different periods. The front we have represented, is the newest part of the edifice, and was erected by Sir Robert Throckmorton about the beginning of the last century. In the windows of the gallery are some coats of arms, in stained glass, with the date, 1572; but some parts of the house appear to be of an earlier age, and were probably erected several centuries antecedent to the above period.

This estate came into the possession of the present family towards the middle of the fifteenth century, by the marriage of Sir Thomas Throckmorton, Knight, with the daughter of Robert Olney, of Weston. The Park was considerably improved by the grandfather of the present possessor. It was laid out under the direction of Mr. Brown, then famous as a landscape gardener, who, availing himself of the advantages of nature, by the aid of art, has produced, in the grounds of Weston Park, a lasting monument of his taste. Continuing our walk towards Olney, at a short

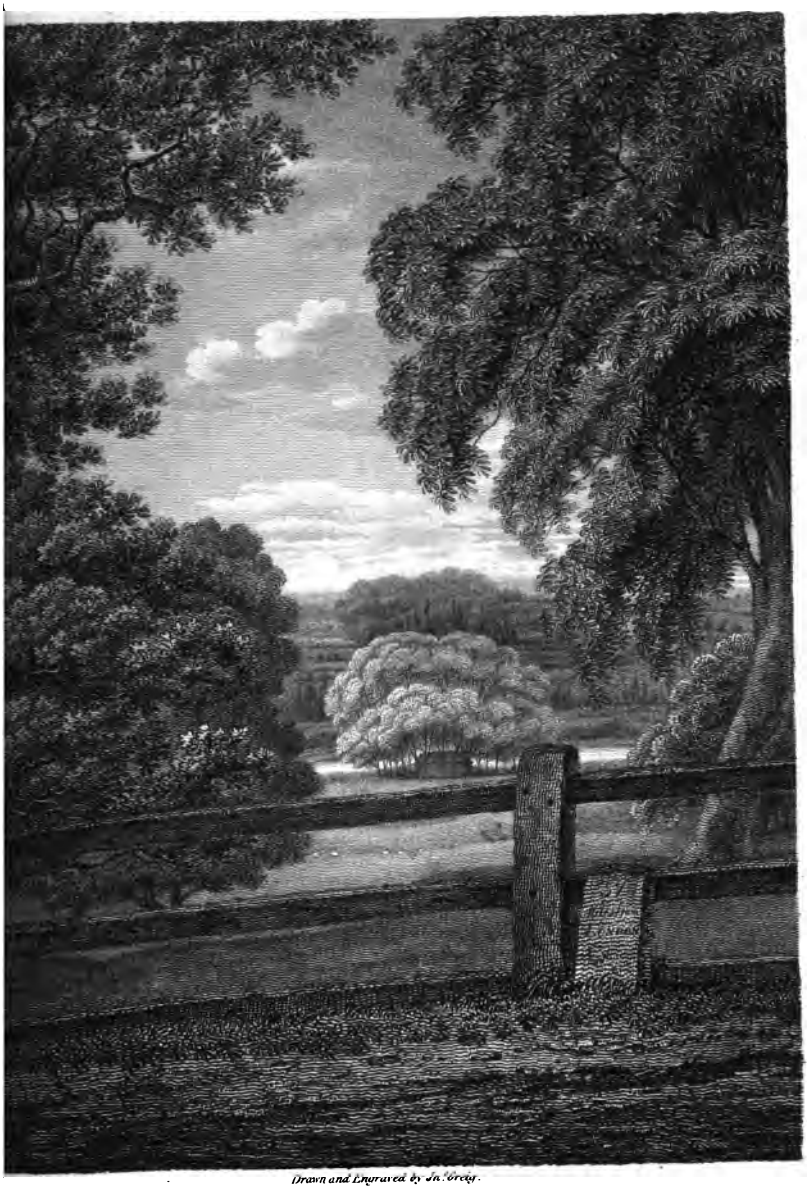
distance from the house, the view we have given presents itself. In the centre, overhanging a boat-house belonging to Mr. Courtenay, stands a cluster of poplars, which Cowper calls

THE ELMS

surrounding "the herdsman's solitary hut." In compliance with our intention to illustrate the poet, we have retained the name he has conferred, though we were convinced, from ocular demonstration, it was erroneous; and have also received a communication from Mr. Courtenay*, who observes, that Cowper wrote the passage in the Task, which refers to these trees, under the influence of a mistake, and he had often told him of the circumstance. The trees stand on a broad level of low land, remote from any object of equal magnitude, and are, in every direction, prominent and conspicuous. The accompanying scenery is charmingly described by the poet in the following lines:

> Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
> Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,
> Conducts the eye along its sinuous course,
> Delighted.....

* We take this opportunity to acknowledge our obligation to this gentleman, and several others of the town of Olney, who favoured us with some important information, and paid a kind and ready attention to our enquiries.



Drawn and Engraved by Ja.s Greig.

THE ELMS.

——— There, fast rooted in their bank,
Stand never overlook'd, our favrite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;

Vide the Task. Book I.

London Publish'd by Verner and Hood, Booksellers in the Poultry.
Ja.s Greig, Chapel Street, Pentonville, May 1.st 1803.

Drawn & Engraved by Jos Storer.

THE SHRUBBERY.

The Saint or Moralist should read,
His Moss green Alley. ——— *Cowper*

Vide the Shrubbery, Vol I.

London Published by Vernor & Hood, Booksellers in the Poultry.
Jos Storer & Jn° Greig, Chapel Street, Pentonville, May 1st 1803

While far beyond, and over-thwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds.

Proceeding still towards Olney, we come to the Spinnie, or

SHRUBBERY.

The entrance to this retired spot is by a gate on the left side of the road, whence a path conducts through the windings of a lonely alley, shaded by the stately sycamore and spreading oak, diversified with fir, beech, lime, and elm, to an ampler space, inclosed on either side by the pensive yew, here stands the MOSS HOUSE. This delightful retreat Cowper has celebrated in some verses of exquisite pathos, written, as he observes, "in a time of affliction;" and, surely, every reader must feel for the unhappy bard, who, when speaking of the beauties of this spot, says, they are such as

Might soothe a soul less hurt than mine,
And please, if any thing could please.

And though at this time the peculiar sensations of his mind permitted him no enjoyment whatever, yet, in happier moments, this lowly roof was often honored with his presence; and a few

lines of his composition, which he caused to be painted on a board, and placed in the Moss House, may give a full idea of the altered state of his mind.

> Here, free from riot's hated noise,
> Be mine, ye calmer, purer joys,
> A book or friend bestows;
> Far from the storms that shake the great,
> Contentment's gale shall fan my seat,
> And sweeten my repose.

This board being stolen, Cowper substituted another, with the following lines from the sixth book of the Task;

> *No noise is here,* or none that hinders thought.
>
> Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
> Charms more than silence. Meditation here
> May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
> May give a useful lesson to the head,
> And Learning wiser grow without his books.

Pursuing our walk, we proceed through what remains of this sequestered alley, whose devious, moss-grown path is bordered by flowering shrubs, which fill the air with their fragrance; while, from the pendant boughs above, the ear is saluted with the melody of warbling birds, producing an effect at once solemn and delightful.

Drawn by Jas. Storer. Engravd by Jn. Greig.

OLNEY CHURCH.

Tall Spire from which the sound of cheerfull bells
Just undulates upon the listning ear

Vide the Task. Book I.

London, Publish'd by Vernor & Hood, Poultry;
Jas. Storer & Jn. Greig, Chapel Street, Pentonville, May 1, 1803.

Returning by the way we entered, near the gate is seen

OLNEY CHURCH.

Continuing our walk towards the town of Olney, having the Shrubbery on the left, we arrive at Overs Brook, which crosses the road like a rivulet, but may be passed over by a wooden bridge. The prospect from the road is extensive, commanding a view of the meadows, intersected by the windings of the Ouse, the village of Emberton, and a range of richly-cultivated distant lands, divided by "hedge-row beauties numberless." By the best traditionary accounts, Weston was formerly a hamlet belonging to Olney; but Overs Brook being, in times of flood, so swelled as to make it dangerous, and almost impracticable to pass, either to perform worship or to bury the dead, the priests made application, and obtained leave of the Pope, to build a church at Weston; since which they have been separate parishes.

At what time Olney Church was built is uncertain, none of the church records being dated earlier than 150 or 160 years back; though, on repairing the church, about two years ago, on one of the beams of the roof was found the following

inscription: "This beam was laid up by Ben Marriot and Michael Hinde, churchwardens, July 17, 1718; and 700 years from its first building." This date probably alludes to the first erection of a church at Olney; as the style of the present building is that commonly termed Gothic, and must therefore be of more modern origin. On entering the town and turning to the left, we come to the market-place: at the lower end is situated the house in which Cowper resided. This is a large, red-brick building, and has not any thing, either in its situation or appearance, to recommend it; being on the skirts of a place called *Silver End*, a name as significant in Olney as that of St. Catharine is in London. Indeed, the town of Olney is by no means a desirable spot; lying in a bottom, it is subject to frequent fogs and damps, which are extremely pernicious, and occasion aguish and rheumatic disorders. Cowper rallies his own situation here, at the time of a flood, in a humorous epistle to Lady Austin, then at Clifton, which may be seen in Hayley's Account of his Life.

Having completed our tour, by returning to the town, we proceed to

Drawn by Ja.s Greig. Engrav'd by Ja.s Storer.

OLNEY BRIDGE.

That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood. ——— *Vide the Task, Book IV.*

London: Published by Verner & Hood, Booksellers, in the Poultry.
Ja.s Storer & Jn.o Greig, Chapel Street, Pentonville, May 1.st 1803.

OLNEY BRIDGE.

This structure is noticed in the opening of the fourth book of the Task:

> "Hark, 'tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge."

It consists of twenty-four arches, of various forms, and placed at irregular distances, bestriding the whole width of the valley, which, when completely over-flowed, presents an expanse of water grand beyond description. The bridge has been broken down many times by the rushing current, which accidents have occasioned much altercation between the inhabitants of Olney and Emberton: as the bridge, uniting the parishes, was thought to be a joint concern, but it has lately been decided in a court of law, that it belongs exclusively to Olney, and, consequently, all the expence of repairs are thrown upon that parish. This view was taken in the meadows near the town's end, on the side next Weston: in the distance is seen the "*embattled tower*" of Emberton Church, and part of the village emerging from the trees.

But imitative strokes can do no more
Than *please the eye*. Sweet nature, *every sense!*
The air salubrious of her lofty hills,
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales,
And music of her woods,—no works of man
May rival these.

THE END.

J. Swan, Printer, No. 76, Fleet Street.

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